

Gadee (Fortess) is the Centre for Political, Socio-economic and Cultural Activities of Telangana Rural Areas in 19th and 20th Century

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Abstract

This papers deal with Gadee is a mammoth structure built by the feudal lords of the 19th century in Telangana. A number of these Gadees are found in all the districts of Telangana which was ruled by the erstwhile Nizam. The study of these Gadees assumes so much of Political, Socio Economic and cultural importance in the modern history of Telangana. Some understand these structures as security cordons other attach many political, socio-economic and cultural objectives for building these structures. The political power of rule making, rule execution and rule adjudication were done in these Gadees. Gadees in Telangana symbolize the feudalism and domination of land owing classes in the society. They are the residential places of Doras who were appointed to collect agricultural taxes from the small and marginal formers. All taxes pertaining to agriculture and non-agriculture were calculated and levied from these mammoth structures. The land owing classes like Deshmukhs, Deshpandes, Patels, Reddies and Velamaas are the predominant social classes that resided in these structures. The normal social practices like the rigid caste rules, social hierarchal relations, untouchability etc. were practiced in these Gadees. Thus the ideology of Brahmanism was prevailed in all the castes with the upper castes looking at the lower castes with the feelings of inferiority. These Gadees also have cultural significance. They used to uphold the religious practices, value system, traditions, festivals of dominant social order and encouraging the Sanskrit and Telugu literature.

Keywords: Dora, Deshpande, Deshmukh, Gadee

Introduction

“In Marati language ‘Ghad’ means fort. The word ‘Gadee’ came from that language. Deshmukh, Deshpandes tradition also came from Maharastra. As the Nizam followed some Marati traditions so this Gadees came from them. *As these Gadees seems to be a small forts. So they called them Gadees*”¹Gadee is the residential place of Dora. It was a modified, well decorated fort. Generall it locates in the village. These Gadees can be divided into two types.

1. Gadees of Samsthanadesh or Big Gadees
2. Gadees of Doras or local landlords

To understand the objectives, purpose and different perceptions on these Gadees’, an understanding of land holding pattern and land Revenue system in the erstwhile Nizam state is necessary.

There were mainly three different types of land tenure in the Nizam's Dominion. In first place Diwani lands which were managed by the Government directly, the revenue from which went to the Government exchequer. The second category of lands were known as Jagir and Inams. They were granted by the state to individuals who enjoyed the revenue from such lands, wholly or partially. Thirdly certain lands were owned by the Nizam the revenue from which went to the privy purse, such lands were called Sarf-I-Khas lands.

Jagirs occupied pre-eminence position in the Nizam's dominion covering about forty percent of the total area. *"At the time of Jagir abolition in 1949 about 1/3 of the total population of the Nizam's dominions numbering six million were living in jagir areas"*.² The various types of Jagirs may be listed as follows. Paigah, Ilaqas, Altumgah, Jat, Mush-rooti, Thankha and Samsthanams. Fourteen samsthans belonged to Hindu Rajahs who were holding their lands since a long time before the Nizam came to the Deccan. These Samsthanadeesh constructed Gadees in their respective areas and dominated the rural area people. These Gadees given them security and political power.

"In Telangana a part of the Deccan region, the office of desh mukh came into existence during the medieval period and survived for a long period has local chiefs, whose sphere of power often spread to a paragana".³ Being locally powerful, they were absorbed as regional political and Administrative structure by the Qutb Shahi Kings as revenue collectors. Nizams depended upon them to carry the administration and given them magisterial and judicial powers and made them the chief of the paragana. Then the office of the desh mukh became a watan i.e. hereditary lease. After Hyderabad state joining the subsidiary alliance they became only contractors or managers but not proprietors. *"When direct revenue collection was introduced by Salarjung, desh mukhs were granted watans or mash"*.⁴ Taking advantage of low literacy rates and their own knowledge of land records they were able to take possession of large areas of the most fertile land. They also leased government lands under various tenures like Makta, Ijara and Banjara to increase agrarian production. They again got some more patta lands for bringing these new lands under cultivation. These landlords were granted rusum annually after abolish in of revenue farming. Later they taken up excise contracts and money lending they acquired additional capital. *"The landlords forcibly transformed the large mass of rural poor into servile labour thus ensuring regular and constant supply of labourers"*.⁵

The power and prestige of landlords increased by the factors like their caste, land money, ruthlessness and their proximity to local government officials. Most of the landlords belonged to upper caste, primarily the Reddy caste, But Brahmin, Kamma, Velama and Muslim doras were also found. *"The real foundation for their power was the people's poverty, dependence and ruthless repression of any sign of dissent"*.⁶

Review of literature

Specific works on the construction Social, Economic functions of Gadees are very scanty. But significant references to these Gadees were made in all major works that dealt on Telangana.

1. **Narender K.V. and Raveendra S** (2011) work entitled “*Telangana Gadeelu*” in Telugu it covers about 30 Gadees of Telangana, in which only two Gadees of Nalgonda District namely ‘Rajapeta’ and ‘Nadigudem’ were considered. This book is the collection of 26 articles “Telangana Gadeelu” published in Andhra Jyothi Telugu daily in Sunday editions. They described the Architecture and family history of Doras of Gadees. Their main focus was on family history
2. **Bhanumathi Ranga Rao (S)** (1992) in her work “*Land revenue administration in The Nizam’s dominions (183-1948)*” explained about the Land management in Nizam’s dominions. She wrote about the various land tenure systems like Guttedary, Talukdari, Amani, Ijra, Pan Makta, Tahud, Sarbasta, Pattadari, Potpattadari, Shikamdari, Kouldari, Watendari, Banjardari and Inamdari. She graphically described the sufferings of the ryots due to various methods adopted by the Nizam and his feudal lords Doras. She described the loopols of Jadirdari and inamdari systems. She also brought out the reforms introduced by Salarjung under the Zilla bandi system.
3. **Thirumali I** (2003) in his book “*Against Dora and Nizam*” discussed about Socio, Economic and Cultural development that taken place in late 19th and 20th century in Telangana. He also explained about the evolution of Dora in Diwani region. He critically examines the Telangana Armed Struggle as the fight between Dora and downtrodden people. He studied this movement in its broader Socio-cultural context, rather than from the angle of more economic and agrarian relationships.
4. **Rao D.V. (Devulapally VenkateshwarRao)** (1988) in his book “*Telangana Sayudha Porata Charitra*” History of Telangana Armed Struggle has given a vivid picture of the people pressures from below and the building up of the party with the villagemilitants.
5. **NallaNarsimhulu**(1981) in his writing “*Telangana Sayudha Poratam – Na Anubavalu*” (Telangana Armed Struggle – My experiences) narrated his activities around Kadivendi was a reflection of the peoples activity initiative, which made the emergence of the Andhra-Mahasabha and the communist party possible in that area.
6. **Ramakrishan Reddy, V.** (1987) book on “*Economic History of Hyderabad State (Warangal Suba 1911-1950)*” dealt vividly on the land holding patterns and briefly discussed the social economic functions of these Gadees

Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To Analyse the political significance of Gadees.
- 2) To assess the necessary general information with regard to socio-economic and cultural conditions during this period.

Political power:

Nizam-ul-Mulk, the Mughal Governor in Deccan after breaking away from the Delhi throne, declared himself as Asifjahi-I in 1724. At this time various autonomous regions were allowed to continue as separate states like Samasthanams and Jagirs.

There were fourteen such Samasthanams in the state in 1948 and there were about twelve big Jagirs and many Small Jagirs and majority of them were in marathawada region. Samasthanams were under local chiefs who called themselves as rajas and Jagirs were under Jagirdars. Though many Jagirs were not granted for perpetuity but practically they became hereditary.

The office of deshmukh came into existence during the medieval period in Telangana. Those were the local chiefs whose sphere of power often spread to a paraganas. As they were locally powerful QutbShahi kings absorbed them as regional political and Administrative officers and appointed them as revenue collectors.

Dorala Rajyam: Gadee is the residence place of Dora, in which he lives with his family members. The Political and social conditions of rural Telangana are revealed round the Gadee in 19th, and first half of the 20th century. They usurped the authority of the state. The power and prestige of land lords increased by the factors like their caste, land, money, ruthlessness. The people were depended on doras for land, work, credit and justice. There were instance of punishing people for wearing shirts and building proper houses. Doras living in Gadees, maintaining cars, educating their children in towns and cities is common thing.

Inam lands were given to service castes in recognition to their service rendered to Government officials when they visit village. But now Doras utilized the system of Inams for their selfishness. "*The service castes of the village holding inam land were forced to work free on landlord land though the inam grants were made to facilitate professional services like shaving, making pots in villages rather than work for the landlords*".⁷ Doras threatened these service caste to snatch these inam lands if they disobey the landlords. Another reason for Doralarajyam was co-operation of other upper castes. Patel and Patwari occupied next place in every village. They also got service with blagelas and vetti workers and lived in comfortable bungalows in the style of the landlords. These people were dishonest and mischievous. "*It was generally feared that enmity with a patwari led only to the grave*".⁸ No cultivator dared to use streams to irrigate their lands without permission of the Dora. The power of dora increased as the judicial powers were in their hand. In the settlement of disputes the dora's authority was unchallenged. "*The dora's power of arbitration extended to ownership disputes, caste conflicts and even domestic quarrels*".⁹

Social-Economic Conditions:

The Asafjahi dynasty of the Nizams was the Muslim rulers of the Hyderabad state. The administration was predominantly Muslim in the Khalsa, Sarf-I-Khas and Paigah lands. Other lands were owned by non-Muslim landed elite in rural areas primarily Brahmin, Reddy and Velma castes. At the bottom of the caste hierarchy

there were Dalits who were largely used as labourers. The Physical labour of these sections was extracted by the feudal lords to construct these Gadees. Generally the society of this period could be divided on the basis of economic class and professional relations were as follows:

1) Dora 2) Upper Caste people 3) Lower Caste people 4) Untouchables 5) Animists

During the Asafjahi's period various autonomous regions were allowed to continue as separate states like Jagirs. Though many Jagirs were not granted for perpetuity but practically they became hereditary. These Jagirdars were called themselves as Rajas. There were about fourteen Samstanams, in Nizam state. The rulers of this Samstanams were called as Dora's. In Diwani areas also some local chiefs were appointed as revenue collectors. Gradually these local chiefs also became as Dora's.

Upper Caste People:

Reddys: Landlords of Telangana hailed primarily from Non-Brahmin upper castes like Reddy, and Velama, around 90 percent of the Deshmukhs, Maqtedarsetc belonged to these castes. However among Reddy, the pancha Reddy were prominent one. They are Motati, Gudati, Pakanati, Chittapu and Gone. The Motatis take the highest rank and are proud of their blood since as they believe that Raja Pratapa Rudra and his descents belonged to this caste.

Kapus: This caste is considered as the village landholders with considerable size of Patta land. *“These landholders lived mostly in a bungalow type pucca houses and had enough cattle, land, and stock of grain and agricultural instruments”*.¹⁰ They dressed like peasant but they lived with dignity. They are considered as PeddaKapu, Peddarytus or motabari rytus. They educated but don't know the rules of government and Urdu language. So these people generally liked to be in the company of Doras and village officers to get their official work done and continue their work peacefully. The younger generation of this group brought the nationalist and communist (AMS) ideologies and politics into the rural areas.

Velmas: Tradition says that the Velamas were in race of Khastriya. Who ruled over the country to the north of the Narmada River. Raja Pratapa Rudra of Kakatiya dynasty attracted by their physique and commanding features welcomed them to his kingdom and conferred on them the command of 77 forts in his kingdom. They gradually became agriculturists and traders. A few of them were rich landlords and village officers. *“Like Reddy's, the velamas were also divided into many sub castes among them the Rachavelama were a highly respected class”*.¹¹ The leading Zamidars in Telangana belonged to this sub-caste.

Brahmins: Brahmins belonged to the highest ritual (sacred) status but they did not possess significant land property. Agriculture was not their main occupation. There was popular proverb in Telugu. ‘BapanasedyamBattemchetu, KapulachaduvuKasulachetu’ (Brahmins cultivation is waste of salary (payment),Kapu's education is waste of fees). The Neogis secularized Brahmins of Telangana were engaged as village Karnams. Patel and Patwari occupied next place to Dora in every village. The Patwari was always belongs to Neogi Brahmin. They also served with Vetti workers and bhagelas live in comfortable bungalows, in

the style of the Doras. These people were dishonest and mischievous “*It was generally feared that enmity with a Patwari lead only to the grave*”¹².

Komatis: Komatis are mostly found in Telangana. They are the traders, shopkeepers and money lenders. This is a wealthy and prosperous caste. They played crucial role in agricultural finance and benefitted a lot. When Nizam joined subsidiary Alliance in 1798, the tax should be paid in cash “*In Telangana payment in kind has always been prevalent. So now landlords played the role of merchants by taking revenue in kind and paying cash to the state. Thus they played an additional role as merchants and restricting the local bania, Komati to shop - keeping.*”¹³ In the time of Doral Rajyam the Komati’s have an additional responsibility to supply the commodities to Govt. officials who visit the village.

Lower Caste People:

In the opinion of Dasarathi Rangacharya Saptangalu (seven service castes) - Kummari (Pottery), Kammari (Melters), Vadla (Carpenters), Kanchari (Metal worker), Mangali (Barbers), Chakali (Washerman) and Mala - Madiga (Out caste leather workers and field labours) were minimum requirement for setting up a village.” “*Therefore there is no village in Telangana without these castes. Inam (tax- free) lands were given to them in lieu of their service apart from granting other remuneration*”.¹⁴

Kummari: Kummara are potters living in Telangana. They make pots, bricks and tiles. “*This caste has six endogamous divisions (1) Shetti or Telaga or penta kumara. (2) Baliya or Lingayathkumara, (3) Bendarkumara (4) Dandu kumara Maratha kumbhar (6)Dandukumbhar*”.¹⁵They have such divisions as Dishwant and silwant, but inter marriages between them and the Lingayaths potters are not allowed.

Kammari: This is a caste of Panchals. It is a Telugu black-smith caste. They belongs to Saivas, Vaishnavas, Lingayaths and most of them are shakthi worshippers.

Vadla: The Telugu name of carpenters was vadlas. This caste also came under panchals. The favourite object of worship of panchals is the goddess Kalika.

Kanchari: The Kanchara is the manufacturers of brass and copper utensils in Telangana. This also a caste of panchals.

Mangali: the barber caste is known as mangali in the Telangana. “*The mangali are divided into 3 sub castes in Telangana. Konda or Sajjan Mangala, Sri. Mangala, Reddi mangala*”.¹⁶ Barbers are generally engaged as musicians and torch bearers. The barber women works as a midwife and nurse.

Chakali: The washer man caste of the Telugu country is known as chakali. They also eat leaving of the higher caste people.

Bhois: This is the caste of fisherman found throughout the state. They are known as Bestas and Gunlodus. The original occupation of the casteis fishing and palanquin-bearing. Gunlodus are dwellers on the river bank. They eat with the Bestas but do not inter marry with them. The Bestas important deity is Ganga the river goddess. At the Dasara festival the Bestas worship their nets.

Darzi is the state caste of Tailoring. The great shepherd caste of the Telugu people is Golla. Goundla is the toddy-drawing and liquor vending caste found in Telangana. Kurmas are the shepherds and blanket wavers caste. Mutrasi is the caste of cultivators, hunters and beggers. The evil practice of dedicating girls to deities prevails. Perka is the caste of people who known for their traditional work of weaving gunny bags. They also carry the grain and salt. They are the caller dealers. Salve is the great weaving caste among the Telugu. They indulge in strong drink and eat mutton, focol and fish.

Untouchables:

Madiga: The Telugu leather-workers and village menials were called as Madiga. The sindhollu, chindiwandlu or Bogammadigasare the courtezans of the madiga caste. Dappumadiga acts as musicians to the Lambadas playing of their religious rites. The Dasarimadigas were spiritual advisers to the Vaishnava sect madigas. Jangamamadigas also claim a high social position among Saivamadigas.

Girls were dedicated to their deities.. These girls known as joginis become prostitutes. *“The madigas eat beef, horse flesh, pork, fowls, mutton and the flesh of animals which have died a natural death. The bear is held in special respect. No madiga will injure are kill this animals. The madigas are more animistic than hindu in their beliefs. Their tribal deity is matangi. They worship other village deities and Hanuman andMahadev”*.¹⁷

Mala: Village watchman and menial in Telangana were called as malas. The Malas are village watchman, labourers and grooms. They form part of the village baluta and paid in kind for the duties discharged. Some of them were coarse cotton cloth.

Animist (Tribes):

Gonds: This is an Animistic tribe confined to the Warangal and Adilabad districts. The Raja Gonds claim to a Rajaput descent. The Pradhans were the holots of the Gonds and serve as genealogists and bards to the raja Gonds. The Thotis in turn, are the bards of the Pradhans and form a group of wandering minstrels. The Principal deity of the Raja Gonds, Pradhansand Thotis is “Phersaphan”. The religion of Gonds is animism. *“The occupation of the Gonds is hunting and agriculture by a rude method known as dhya or daha”*.¹⁸

Koya: Koya is a forest tribe chiefly found in Warangal district. They have a dialect of their own, mixed with Telugu words. The Koyas are animistic in their beliefs and worship Mamili. They still offer human sacrifices in 19th and 20th century. Marriages both by proposal and by force are in vogue. Elopements are common.

Lambada: Lambadas are a wandering tribe of grain and salt carriers, cattle breeders and graziers found in the districts of Warangal, Nalgonda, Mahaboobnagar and Adilabad. They are also known as Banjaras. These people have no settled homes and live a wandering life in bands, tandas. Each band lives under a hereditary leader called Naik. They divided into four tribes. 1.Mathura 2. Lubhani3. Charan and 4.Dhodia

Yerkala: A wandering tribe of thieving, begging, fortune telling and basket making gypsies found living in movable bamboo and date mat-hut in all the Telugu districts. The Yerukala derive their name from the Telugu word Eruka, as the women of the tribe profess to be great expert in fortune telling. They have few scruples

regarding their diet. They eat fowls, fish, pork, carrion, field rats, mongooses, foxes and cats. They indulge freely in strong drink.

Vetti System: In Telangana the Vetti system was all pervasive affecting all classes of the people in varying degree. *“Like most of the Deccan states, in Telanganato a barabalutadars played an important role in colonising the region and setting up villages and developing agriculture.”*¹⁹ DasharathiRangaCharyaopinioned that Saptangalu (Seven service caste) were the minimum requirement for setting up a village. These castes were given Inam (tax free land) in lieu of their service. But during the 19th and 20th century these service castes and out caste were converted into Vetti (forced labour) laboureres in the changed environment.

The Vetti people are supposed to work in the houses of village officials like Dora, Patel, Patwari, Mali patel. One man from the one harijan family had to send to do Vetti. These people had to attend the daily work of the above people. They also carry the post. They had to do extra work whenever an officer came to the village chavadi. They had to collect wood from the forest for fuel, cleaning work in the village, carry the luggage of the Dora’s relatives and government officials. Boya, Besta and Chakali communities were forced to carry on their shoulders men and women of the landlord families. They also forced to run before and behind the bullock cart as path cleaners and escorts. The toddy tappers were required to supply five pots of toddy every day. The weavers had to supply cloths to the landlord’s household servants.

The carpenter and blacksmith had to supply all agricultural implements to the landlords free of cast and carry out free repairs. The washermen were forced to wash cloths and vessels in the house of the deshmukh and village officials. He should pound the turmeric into powder, should slaughter and prepare the chicken and goat for curry. The barber should shave master’s head and anointed bath. He should lit the lamps, spread the beds and arrange the pillows, press the master’s legs up to mid night. The potter was forced to provide hundreds of pots to the officers and landlords. He had to cook food for all those officers who comes to village.

The cobblers had to patrol day and night in front of Dora’s mansion. He had to husk puttis of paddy into fine rice and make announcement on dappu. The shepherd had to give a sheep from each of their heads on all the festival days of the village. When any officer visits the village the merchants had to supply by turn all commodities including good ghee. Suddala Hanumanthu brilliantly depicted the caste-based Vetti, extraction in a song “Vetti chakiri vidhanamu”.

Bhagela System: The other important form of social evil was bhagela system. This type of labour extraction was predominant in rural areas of Nalgonda and Warangal district. By this system labourers contracted to serve his employers for an indefinite period on a low subsistence wage in repayment of a loan advanced by the employees to the labourers. Usually every landlord employed bhagelas. The main features of bhagela system are as follows: 1. Service was full time and any work assigned by the employer. 2. Changing of master was not allowed and the master’s belief was that he had legal rights to compel a bhagela work. 3. Generally, the bhagela was in debt to his master. 4. When a bhagela died, his debt to his master transferred to his children. 5. For any

offence of omission or commission the master have the right to punish him such has starve or confine a bhagela.

6. The grain or the goods that was given as remuneration did not meet the minimum physical needs of bhagela.

7. Generally bhagelas were ordinarily low-caste people like untouchable and low caste sudras.

8. It is only a oral arrangement “*The landlords who began to produce for the market had converted the gayakas, artisans and sudra lower castes into serfs (bheglas and vetti workers) and extracted their labour to fulfill the modern market needs.*”²⁰

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